

# SUCCESS STORY

## Wikoff Color Corporation

South Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership

*"As an employee-owned company, we believe that our emphasis on Lean Manufacturing and our partnership with the SCMEP are perfectly aligned with our company culture and values." Geoff Peters, President & CEO*

### Lean – A Philosophy Here to Stay

**ABOUT.** Founded in 1956, Wikoff Color Corporation manufactures printing inks and coatings for the graphic arts industry. The company has approximately 500 employees, 140 of which are located at its primary facilities in Fort Mill, South Carolina. Wikoff has an additional 27 manufacturing locations throughout the US, Canada and Europe. The employee-owned company manufactures thousands of individual products, providing ink, varnishes and coatings to the folding carton, label, flexible packaging, commercial and security coating markets.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Wikoff had already been in business for 50 years when it was introduced to the South Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership (SCMEP), a NIST MEP affiliate. Batch production challenges, along with the associated high inventories needed to manage demand, initially spurred Wikoff's interest in Lean Manufacturing. Company leaders asked SCMEP to perform a Competitiveness Review Assessment, and wasted no time in starting a Lean training initiative. Wikoff's executive management supported the efforts by designating an internal team, the Center for Continual Improvement (CCI), to learn Lean strategy and tools so Lean could be rolled out across the greater organization.

**MEP'S ROLE.** CCI members and select individuals from the Fort Mill operation participated in training on Principles of Lean Manufacturing, Value Stream Mapping, and Policy Deployment. In addition, team members participated in multiple Kaizen improvements events to bring immediate impact on the plant floor. These initial efforts reduced work-in-process and improved overall productivity and customer response time. Subsequently, SCMEP provided training in Interpersonal Styles, Six Sigma, and Problem Solving, as well as technical assistance in the re-layout of Wikoff's three largest production facilities. The company avoided building an additional warehouse and reported \$800,000 in cost savings over the years.

The sustained Lean and continuous improvement initiatives helped Wikoff remain competitive in a difficult business environment, retaining millions of dollars in sales. New members of the CCI begin their learning process at SCMEP's Business Learning Center, and CCI personnel often receive requests from Wikoff's customers to come to their operations to provide training or participate in a Lean activity. Wikoff is a South Carolina success story when it comes to Lean. It has not been a short-term, flavor of the month journey, but a long-term plan that continues to evolve in partnership with SCMEP.



## RESULTS



**\$800,000** in cost savings



Millions of dollars in retained sales

## NEXT STEPS



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